



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
New England District  
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# Yankee Engineer

July 2008



**Col. Feir is new District  
Commander for Corps  
in New England**

See story on page 3



# Yankee Voices

Eva Marie D'Antuono, Cathy Leblanc, Sheila Winston-Vincuilla, and Rachael Raposa



## Congratulations

...to **Dave Margolis**, Project Management, and his wife, **Kim**, on the birth of their daughter, **Aliza Paige**, May 16.

... to **Heather Rausch**, Engineering, and her husband, **David**, on the birth of their daughter, **Hannah Sharon Rausch**, June 5.

...to **John Macpherson**, Construction-Operations MMR Resident Office, and his wife, **Claire**, on the birth of their daughter, **Emma**, on June 12.

...to **Mark Habel**, Planning Branch, Engineering/Planning, who was selected as the WE committee's employee of the month for June. Mark is recognized in part for his creative presence in many things navigation. The District would undoubtedly be handicapped when it comes to coastal planning expertise and likely we would have fewer coastal projects in the works.

## Maine Congressman congratulates Corps employee

Dear Craig Hysler,

I am honored to extend my congratulations to you as this year's nominee for United States Army Corps of Engineers' Hard Hat of the Year Award. It is my understanding that this is one of the highest construction awards given by the Corps of Engineers.

You have been a driving force in the state of Maine as you have been involved and overseen the Calais and Jackman Border Patrol Stations as well as the upcoming Border Patrol Station in Van Buren. I have recently toured the Calais station and saw some of the construction challenges such as rugged terrain and subzero temperatures that you encountered for that facility. It is a testament to your ingenuity.

Your work ethic since you came to the USACE has been duly noted as "above exceptional." On behalf of the people of the state of Maine, thank you for your expertise and willingness to go the extra mile to keep the projects on budget, completed on time and satisfying your customers.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if even I may be of assistance to you. With warmest regards,

Michael H. Michaud  
Member of Congress

## Sympathy

...to Engineering retiree, **Robert Hunt**, on the passing of his wife, **Brenda**, May 7. The Hunts were both longtime members of the NED Bowling League.

...to **Joe Redlinger**, Real Estate, on the passing of his mother, **Katherine Redlinger**, May 31.

...to **Andrea Pittman**, Logistics, and her husband, **Ed**, on the passing of Ed's father, **Robert E. Pittman, Sr.**, June 21. Mr. Pittman was a retired Sergeant and Police Officer of 40 years with the Bedford Police Department.

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# Command of New England District passes from Thalken to Feir during ceremony

The 34th Commander of the Corps in New England accepted the command flag during a Change of Command ceremony in historic Faneuil Hall in Boston, Mass., June 27.

Col. Curtis Thalken relinquished command to Col. Philip Thomas Feir in front of hundreds of guests to include family, friends, employees, retirees, former District and Division Commanders, Congressional representatives, Civilian Aides to the Secretary of the Army, and heads of federal, state, and local agencies. Brig. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, North Atlantic Division Commander, presided over the ceremony.

The Change of Command ceremony emphasizes the continuity of leadership and unit identity despite changes in individual authority and also symbolizes the transfer of command responsibility from one individual to another.

Master of Ceremonies and Chief of Public Affairs, Larry Rosenberg, recounted the formation of the Corps of Engineers in 1775 and its first Chief of Engineers, Col. Richard Gridley. "Since that time in history, the Corps of Engineers has done much to serve and protect the United States of America," he said.

As Rosenberg recognized the Thalken and Feir families, Scott Michalak presented Mrs. Carolyn Thalken with red roses that have bloomed, representing a flourished and successful command. Paul Murphy followed Michalak and presented Mrs. Tara Feir with a bouquet of budding white roses, representing new beginnings.

Rosenberg listed the many awards and proclamations received for Col. Thalken and Col. Feir, to include proclamations from the Governors of Connecticut and New Hampshire.

The actual Change of Command ceremony followed the reading of the



*Col. Curtis Thalken takes the Command Flag from William Scully before passing it to Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite and relinquishing his command of the District.*

proclamations. The Senior Civilian of the Organization, William Scully, passed the Unit Colors to the outgoing Commander, Col. Thalken, signifying the Unit's appreciation for his leadership and guidance.

Col. Thalken then passed the Unit Colors to the Senior Commander, Brig. Gen. Semonite, signifying the relinquishment of command and the gratitude for the opportunity to lead the Civilians and Soldiers of the District.

Brig. Gen. Semonite passed the flag to the incoming Commander, Col. Feir, entrusting him with the responsibility and care of the District.

Immediately after the orders giving him command were read, Col. Feir passed the Unit Colors back to Scully,

signifying the trust and confidence in the leaders of the organization.

After the Change of Command, Brig. Gen. Semonite talked about how the Corps has defended New England under Col. Thalken's command and how it will continue to do so under Col. Feir's leadership. "Col. Thalken is retiring with pride in what he's done and Col. Feir arrives with hope and new ideas," he said. "Both are the best the Army has to offer."

The North Atlantic Division Commander said that although New England District is saying farewell to a great man, Col. Feir is a very competent, qualified leader. "He was an unbelievable troop leader," said Brig.

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*Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite (left), with the help of William Scully, fastens the Legion of Merit medal on Col. Curtis Thalken. (right) Carolyn Thalken says a few words at the retirement ceremony. (Photos by C.J. Allen)*

## Thalken retires from U.S. Army after 25 years of service

With the historic Faneuil Hall as a backdrop, Col. Curtis Thalken ended his service to the people of New England and the nation when he retired from the U.S. Army after 25 years on June 27.

Col. Andrew Nelson, former New England District Deputy Commander, served as narrator for the ceremony. He told the audience that Col. Thalken's dedication, devotion to duty, leadership,

and loyalty have been a source of pride to all who came into contact with him. "We are proud to have had the opportunity to serve with him," he said.

Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite, North Atlantic Division Commander, presented Col. Thalken with his official retirement certificate, honorably discharging him from military service.

Col. Thalken received several prestigious awards not only in recognition of

his outstanding tour as Commander of New England District, but for his exceptional work throughout his military career.

The first award presented to Col. Thalken was the Legion of Merit. He received the award for "exceptionally meritorious service while serving the United States Army and the nation in various positions of increasing responsibility, culminating as the Commander of the New England District, United States Army Corps of Engineers."

Before Brig. Gen. Semonite presented Col. Thalken with the next award, the Silver de Fleury Medal on behalf of the Army Engineer Association, he gave the audience some history behind the award and told the story of the medal's namesake, Francois Louis Tesseidre de Fleury.

Col. Thalken received the Silver Order of the de Fleury Medal for his inspirational leadership to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Simply put, Col. Thalken is receiving this award because he is a great engineer," he said.

Mr. Chris Adams, representing



*Col. Thalken's Change of Command and retirement ceremonies were held in historic Faneuil Hall in Boston, Mass.*

Massachusetts Congressman William Delahunt, read a personal note from the Congressman congratulating Col. Thalken on his retirement. Adams also presented Col. Thalken with a gift from Congr. Delahunt -- the United States flag that was flown over the nation's capitol in his honor.

Following the awards presentation, Brig. Gen. Semonite called Col. Thalken a Corps of Engineers Pentathlete, saying he was a scholar, an unbelievable engineer, a leader, a family man and a war fighter.

"Col. Thalken is an American Hero and he supports his people to get the job done," said Brig. Gen. Semonite. "He brought 500 Soldiers into Afghanistan during wartime and he brought them all back."

Brig. Gen. Semonite called up Col. Thalken's daughters, Caitlin and Chelsea, and recognized them with Division Commander's coins for the sacrifices they made and for supporting their dad over the years.

The Division Commander then called Mrs. Carolyn Thalken up to thank her for her support. "I have a very high regard for military spouses," he said. "As you sent your husband off to war, you stood behind him proud and strong. We're proud to include you in his retirement ceremony."

Brig. Gen. Semonite presented Mrs. Thalken with the Commander's Award for Public Service and a Certificate of Appreciation for her, "unselfish, faithful, and devoted service that helped to make possible her husband's lasting contributions to the nation."

Mrs. Thalken recalled the intense emotions of being a new Army wife and that she has great pride in her

husband and all Soldiers for what they have done to keep the nation safe. She recalled pinning Col. Thalken's Captain Bars on his shoulders and having 12 homes in 24 years.

Mrs. Thalken concluded by recalling how a patient at the hospital she worked at told her he was from Bosnia and that he was honored to meet the wife of an American Soldier. "I will always be your proud Army wife," she



*Carolyn Thalken, Col. Curtis Thalken and Chelsea Thalken prepare to greet well wishers after the retirement ceremony.*

said.

Col. Nelson presented Col. Thalken congratulatory letters from Gov. M. Jodi Rell (Connecticut), Gov. Donald Carcieri (Rhode Island), Gov. John Lynch (New Hampshire), Congr. Jim Langevin (Rhode Island), Congr. Thomas Allen (Maine), and the Honorable Edward Masterman, Massachusetts Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army.

Col. Thalken said it was hard for him to believe that it had already been three years since he took command. "It has been a great honor for me to serve with you all and help to make both the people and the environment of New England safer," he said.

The retired District Commander recalled some of the projects and the three major storm and flood events that occurred in New England under his Command. "I can't say enough about the talented group of people in this

District," he said. "Individually and collectively they are exceptional in the efforts they put forth every day on behalf of the projects, permits, and issues they deal with."

Col. Thalken also praised the District's corporate partners for helping the District to conduct the nation's business. He reminisced about his 25 years in the U.S. Army and the different countries his tours of duty took him.

"The Army has been a challenging job, but a rewarding career," he said.

The Colonel wished Col. Feir and his family good luck and an enjoyable tour in New England. He then talked about people who mentored him and helped him along the way. He recalled valuable advice given to him by his first Platoon Sergeant, Sgt. First Class Bruce Dukes. He thanked Brig. Gen. Semonite for his guidance and mentorship. Lastly, he thanked his parents, his

wife, and daughters for all of their love and support. To his wife he said, "You have been the glue that has held our family together through all of our adventures."

Scott Michalak presented Col. Thalken's wife and daughters with flowers for the Colonel as he spoke. "As we now set off on a new chapter in our lives in the private sector and leave the Corps of Engineers, the Army family and all of you at the New England District, my family and I say farewell and wish each and every one of you good luck in the future," Col. Thalken said. "One last time -- thanks again for all you do each and every day. Keep up the good work. Essayons!"

In addition to the musical selections performed by the Air Force Band of Liberty, Colonial Brass Unit, from Hanscom Air Force Base, Mr. M. Grady Boatwright, Jr., bagpiper, also played during the retirement ceremony.





Photos by Brian Murphy

*The Nelsons and Thalkens cut cakes to pass out as dessert to party guests.*

## District family says good-bye to two of its own at farewell party

Over 100 well-wishers traveled to Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford, Mass., to say good-bye and good luck to Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, and Col. Andrew Nelson, former New England District Deputy Commander, during a retirement/good-bye party held at the Base's Minuteman Lounge, June 12.

Col. Thalken commanded the New England District for three years, and Col. Nelson served four years. Col. Thalken said that he and Col. Nelson go back a long time, first meeting overseas when they worked on the Camp Bondsteel project in Kosovo. Col. Thalken recalled that he was very pleased when he heard that he would be serving with Col. Nelson once again in New England. "I couldn't ask for a better 'wing man,'" he said.

Although they have different command styles, Col. Thalken said they worked great together as a team and balanced each other out. "Thank you for your support in the New England District and all the times before serving overseas," he said. "Thank you for your friendship. I'm going to miss you and your family."

In front of a standing audience, Col. Thalken presented Col. Nelson with a Meritorious Service Medal, signed by

Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite, North Atlantic Division Commander, for his outstanding service as Deputy District Commander and acting District Commander at the New England District. Bobby Byrne, Chief of Programs/Project Management read the citation. "Col. Nelson's commitment to excellence and public service enhanced the safety of the region's citizens and the stature of the District throughout New England."

Bill Scully, Deputy Division Engineer for Programs/Project Management, introduced retirees and special guests and talked a little about both colonels.

Byrne served as Master of Ceremonies. He and Logistics Supervisor Norbert "Z" Zimmerman had the audience laughing with an interpretation skit. "Col. Thalken says I have the worst New England accent, so Z has come up to interpret for me so you don't miss anything I say tonight," he said.

As Byrne told his joke, Zimmerman, who is a retired First Sergeant in the U.S. Army and is from Illinois, occasionally interjected "regular speech" for the benefit of Col. Thalken and the non-native New Englanders in the audience.

*Continued on page 14*



## Guirguis joins retirement community with 20 years of service

*Dozens of people from all over New England District and the Army's Mass. Community Based Health Organization Unit gathered in the Concord Park Maine and New Hampshire conference rooms to attend Amal Guirguis' retirement reception, June 4. Guirguis, who always had a smile on her face and a cheerful "good morning, how are you!" to everyone she met, retired with 20 years of federal service.*

Tim Winter, Regional Information Officer for the Buffalo and New England Districts, served as Master of Ceremonies during the official portion of the retirement reception. He presented her with a dozen roses and a card. "On behalf of everyone here, I wish you well on your retirement," he said.

Col. Curtis L. Thalken, New England District Commander, said that he was pleased to represent all of the former Commanders who Guirguis had served over the years and conveyed their thanks for her contributions to the agency. Col. Thalken presented Guirguis with her retirement certificate, pin and certificate of appreciation. "Thank you for all the hard work you've done for the Corps of Engineers," he said.

Guirguis thanked everyone for attending her reception and said that she was very happy to work with them at the New England District and considered them a part of her family. The new retiree doesn't plan on resting for very long – she plans to continue working in private industry.



Photos by Brian Murphy

*Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, officially retires Amal Guirguis from federal service during her good-bye reception.*



*Tim Winter arrives with flowers.*



*Amal Guirguis (standing 2nd left) mingles with friends and coworkers during her reception.*

# Lefebvre is new Deputy District Commander

The New England District Team welcomed Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre as their new Deputy Commander, June 1.

Lt. Col. Lefebvre previously served as the Engineering Technical Lead on District driven projects at the Massachusetts Military Reservation project.

Lt. Col. Lefebvre is a native of Rhode Island. He graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Rhode Island. He received a Masters Degree in Environmental Science from the University of Oklahoma.

His military education includes the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, Combined Arms and Services Staff College, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Lt. Col. Lefebvre began his military career in 1986 as a Platoon Leader, C Company, Executive Officer, HHC Company, and Battalion Construction Officer, in the 588th Engineer Battalion (Corps) (Combat) at Fort Polk, Louisiana; Adjutant (S-1) and A Company Commander in the 84th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

In 1993, he became the Facilities Engineer for the U.S.



*Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre*

Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. From 1997 to 1999 he served as the Chief of Operations for the Directorate of Housing and Public Works and then Operations Officer (S-3) for the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. Following that tour, Lieutenant Colonel Lefebvre served as the Engineer Chief for the 2nd Simulation Exercise Group in Bristol, Rhode Island. He then became an Instructor and Curriculum Development Officer for the Combined Arms Services Staff School at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Lt. Col. Lefebvre then deployed to Iraq for one year and served as the Gulf Region South District Commander's liaison to the Multinational Division Southeast. Lt. Col. Lefebvre then served as an Engineering Technical Lead on the Massachusetts Military Reservation Project.

Lt. Col. Lefebvre's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (4th OLC), Army Commendation Medal (1st OLC), Army Achievement Medal (2nd OLC), National Defense Service Medal (1 BSS), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Parachutist Badge, Ranger Tab, and the Army Superior Unit Award (1st OLC).

The new Deputy Commander replaces Col. Andrew Nelson, who also recently received his promotion during a ceremony at the District and has moved on to his new assignment as Deputy Garrison Commander for Transformation at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

## Wellness Fair brings health organizations to the District

The Federal Occupational Health Office held its annual Health and Wellness Fair for New England District employees in the Concord Park Cafeteria, May 21.

Members of the Massachusetts Community Based Health Care Organization also attended.

Health, safety and wellness providers from 10 organizations provided educational handouts, brochures, demonstrations and made themselves available to answer any questions participants had throughout the event.

Some of the free activities that exhibitors provided for attendees were chair massages, Dermascan Face analyses, ear checks, grip strength assessments, metabolic testing, vision screenings, body

mass index checks, safety information, and blood pressure screenings. Those attendees that participated in a survey were entered into a raffle to win half a dozen prizes that ranged from a plant to a Patriotic Picnic arrangement.

This year, four new organizations participated in the Health Fair -- Marie Skinner, yoga instructor; Concord Center Acupuncture, Lexington Health Collaborative and the Kidney Foundation.

Returning organizations included the New England District's Safety Office, the

Federal Occupational Health Office, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, GEHA Insurance, Emerson Hospital and Davis Vision.



Photo by Brian Murphy

*Mary Christopher gets her vision checked during the fair.*



# Massachusetts' Fisheries Agency, Corps sign in-lieu fee agreement for minor essential fish habitat impacts

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game (DFG), its Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District have entered into an agreement to establish a program of fees in lieu of on-site mitigation for minor impact to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in Massachusetts.

The In Lieu Fee (ILF) program was implemented by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mass., DFG, and Mass., DMF signed on June 4.

In-Lieu Fee mitigation will occur in circumstances where a permittee is required to compensate for the functions and values of Essential Fish Habitat lost as a result of the Corps authorization to conduct work in waters of the United States after all efforts are made to avoid and minimize impacts. Recipients of permits or authorizations for projects in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts may be eligible to use the ILF program to satisfy mitigation requirements of the Corps' Massachusetts Programmatic General Permit (MA PGP).

"The In-Lieu Fee is an option available to the applicant where project specific mitigation is not available or is not expected to be successful," said Col. Curtis Thalken, the Corps' New England District Commander. "Use of the ILF program for specific projects is contingent on Corps approval."

"We greatly appreciate the efforts of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work with us on this memorandum of understanding and look forward to working with the Army Corps to implement this program for the benefit of our

marine resources," said Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Mary Griffin. "We feel that the in-lieu fee program will greatly benefit marine habitat as well as simplify the permitting process for project proponents in many instances."

"This agreement is a very important way to improve coordination of ocean activity and will help enhance

pensatory mitigation projects. Most recently, the Division implemented a number of these projects with mitigation funds associated with the construction of the 29-mile "Hubline" natural gas pipeline in Massachusetts Bay.

Funds deposited into DMF Expendable Trust could be used for efforts such as eelgrass restoration to provide important shallow water habitat to ju-

venile crustaceans, shellfish, and finfish which commonly inhabit sea grass meadows. Restoration of these beds would serve as partial mitigation for assumed impacts to marine resources identified relative to projects permitted under the ILF program. Other possibilities for restoration projects would include shellfish stock enhancement, and fish passage improvements for anadromous

fish such as American shad, alewife, blue-black herring and rainbow smelt.

Under the ILF, appropriate mitigation projects will be recommended to the Corps for approval by a Steering Committee chaired by DMF. The fee in-lieu of project-specific mitigation will be determined by the Corps of Engineers in consultation with the Steering Committee and appropriate Federal and state agencies. The permit will state the amount of the fee to be paid before the permit is valid. Oversight of the ILF program will be the responsibility of the Corps of Engineers and DMF. The MOU can be reviewed online at the Corps website <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select Regulatory/Permitting and then Massachusetts In-Lieu Fee. (Joint Press Release)



Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander (front left) and other participants sign the Massachusetts in-lieu fee agreement.

Photo by Dan McKiernan

the marine environment," said Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries Director Paul Diodati. "While avoiding and minimizing changes to the environment remain major objectives of environmental organizations, the ILF program will contribute to restoration of productive habitats when less-productive areas are altered."

The ILF program will collect fees which will be deposited in DMF's Expendable Trust and which will be used for the restoration, creation, enhancement, and preservation of EFH resources within the waters of Massachusetts.

The program will provide compensation for lost EFH functions and values that result from activities authorized under the MA PGP. The DMF is an experienced administrator of com-



Contractors work to get water flowing at the Town Pond Restoration Project in 2007.

Photo by Dave Larsen

## Federal, state officials mark completion of Town Pond Environmental Restoration Project in Portsmouth

by Timothy Dugan, Public Affairs

*Federal, state and local officials marked the completion of the Town Pond Environmental Restoration Project in a ceremony on June 16 in the town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island.*

The Corps' New England District has partnered with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and others to restore 23 acres of salt pond and salt marsh habitat in the wildlife sanctuary of Town Pond.

"The Town Pond Environmental Restoration Project is now providing meaningful and productive ecological improvements and enhancements to this area of Rhode Island," said Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander. "The Corps has partnered with federal, state, and local agencies and non-governmental organizations to help restore 23 acres of salt pond and salt marsh habitat in the wildlife sanctuary at Town Pond."

Town Pond is located between Mount Hope Bay and Route 24, less than two miles south of the highway's Sakonnet River crossing in the town of Portsmouth. The project site is located at the northern end of Aquidneck Island.

The purpose of the project was to restore estuarine habitat, salt marsh and associated values to fish and wildlife.

Town Pond was a tidally influenced salt pond and salt marsh prior to a Corps navigation improvement project placing dredged material. Filling the pond with dredged material increased its elevation above that of regular tidal flooding converting it to a lower value, non-tidal habitat. The

project partners recognized the potential value of the site and joined in an effort to restore the marsh using a Corps program to modify projects to improve the environment.

"The Town Pond Environmental Restoration project has been a true collaborative effort, with DEM and the Army Corps of Engineers working together with many partners to assure its success," noted Department of Environmental Management Director W. Michael Sullivan, Ph.D. "The restored salt pond supplements and enhances the productivity and ecological value of the area by providing habitat for coastal fish and wildlife such as shellfish, flounder and other finfish, herons, egrets, and waterfowl. With this project, we have been able to restore a significant part of Aquidneck Island's natural heritage."

Project partners also include the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Roger Williams University, the Aquidneck Land Trust, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, Ducks Unlimited, the town of Portsmouth and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program.

Site work began in September 2005. To accomplish the restoration, the dredged material placed in the 1950's had to be excavated to elevations that would support about half salt



marsh and half mudflat and salt pond. There will be about 2.5 acres of permanent open water. A weir with a top elevation of -0.2 feet NGVD will maintain permanent open water depths between 1.8 and 2.9 feet.

An estimated 125,000 cubic yards of existing dredged material has been excavated to restore tidal connection between Town Pond and Mount Hope Bay. Over time, the interior marsh will be transformed from a lower value brackish habitat to a high value salt pond and salt marsh habitat.

A berm was constructed to separate Founder's Brook which runs along the west side of the site from the restored salt pond. A new 42-inch diameter culvert with a flap gate has replaced the antiquated culvert at the end of the brook located southwest of the railroad bridge.

A concrete weir 36 feet long was installed to regulate a permanent pool where the entrance channel meets the interior marsh. The channel connecting Town Pond to Mount Hope Bay has been partially relocated.

Elevated material not used to construct the berm was placed on site on the east side of the marsh extending from the edge of the access road across the edge of the Montaup Country Club. This area is being planted with coastal grasses.

Salt water was returned to the pond on Sept. 21, 2007 for the first time in 50 years when the final cut was made to connect the pond to Mount Hope Bay. Tidal flows are now being restored to this important salt pond for the first time in over 50 years, thereby improving the water quality, providing habitat, public access, and eliminating nuisance mosquito breeding areas.

The work was accomplished by Northern Construction Service, LLC, of Palmer, Mass., at a cost of \$4.6 million. The restored salt pond is now providing habitat for coastal fish and wildlife, such as shellfish, flounder and other finfish, herons, egrets, and waterfowl, and restoring the productivity and ecological value of the area.



*Buffumville Lake was closed for a little over two weeks.*

## Cyanobacteria Bloom temporarily closes Buffumville Lake Park

On June 3, a water sample collected from the beach early in the day at Buffumville Lake was examined and the presence of cyanobacteria was verified. This is the same bacteria that closed the lake at the end of last summer. The park was closed and no water contact was advised to include pets. The boat ramp remained open and fishing was permitted. The lake was reopened on June 17.

**Toxic Algal Bloom.** Cyanobacteria, formerly known as "blue-green algae," cyanobacteria naturally occur in New England waters. Some species, including *Microcystis* and *Anabaena*, produce toxins in their cells, and these toxins can be released after the cells die.

Cyanobacteria become a public-health concern when they reach bloom conditions, but toxin levels may be low even during a clearly visible bloom. Health effects from cyanobacteria toxins are mainly from skin irritation and rashes. More serious health effects can come from swallowing the water, but accidental swallowing of water during swimming is usually very limited, and confirmed deaths from cyanobacteria toxins are mostly limited to dogs, which will actually drink the water.

Cyanobacteria toxins can be le-

thal to fish; however, the blooms can also kill fish by depleting dissolved oxygen (DO) levels and causing large diurnal fluctuations in pH. Consequently, the finding of dead fish during bloom conditions is a cause for concern, but not proof of the presence of toxins at levels harmful to humans.

The widespread occurrence of blooms in 2007 indicates a widespread cause, most likely the spring storms that washed nutrients into the lakes followed by the unusually dry summer that resulted in warm water with minimal flushing. While it is hoped that the dry conditions seen in 2007 will not reoccur soon, the aging of our reservoirs is likely making them more susceptible to future blooms.

Natural aging in lakes causes them to fill in and become marshes, meadows, and ultimately forests, but reservoirs tend to age more quickly due to the higher ratio of drainage area to lake surface. Development in the watershed accelerates this process by adding more sediment to the streams and more nutrients in these sediments.

The early presence of a bloom may indicate some left over bacteria from last summer and coupled with the high waters again this spring may lead to more bloom throughout the summer. (Compiled by Tim Russell)

## Ancient Asian health care highlights heritage program

The Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Program Manager and the Equal Employment Opportunity Office offered a presentation on Acupuncture and Eastern medicine. The event to observe the Asian American/Pacific Islander Month took place in the Concord Park Theatre on June 4.

Christina Noonan, Lic.Ac., M.Ac, the Outreach Coordinator for the New England School of Acupuncture, served as the event's keynote speaker.

Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, welcomed the audience and talked about the history of Chinese immigrants coming to America, the contributions they have made to the country that have transcended time and are still significant today, and their fight for equality.

"Chinese Americans fought for not only their rights, but also for their dignity and self respect," he said.

Peter Hugh, the Asian American/Pacific Islander Program Manager, noted the theme this year will focus on a very interesting alternative health care practice – Acupuncture.

Using an Acupuncture model to illustrate points, a PowerPoint presentation, and Col. Thalken as a volunteer to demonstrate cupping and diagnostics, Noonan gave a detailed lecture on Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine. Topics included history and background, theory and philosophy, diagnosis and treatment goals, herbal medicine, medical conditions that could benefit from acupuncture/herbal medicine treatment, medication, exercise, and nutrition.

After her presentation, Col. Thalken presented Noonan with a Bunker Hill plaque for her participation in the event. A reception followed at the end of the



*Christina Noonan demonstrates the "cupping" method on Col. Curtis Thalken during the presentation.*

event.

Acupuncture is an ancient practice that originated in the Chinese Shang Empire in 1,000 B.C. It is one of the oldest and most commonly used forms

of medicine in the world.

The practice includes the superficial insertion and manipulation of disposable and sterile fine stainless steel needles into the skin to relieve ailments. There are more than 2,000 Acupuncture points on the human body and the type of ailment dictates where acupuncture needles are inserted.

Christina Noonan practices both Japanese and traditional Chinese styles of Acupuncture, including Shaku-Ju Therapy, a non-insertive Acupuncture style, which is a gentle and effective treatment for pediatric and needle-phobic patients.

She is licensed by the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine and a Diplomat of Acupuncture by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. She is also certified by the Auricular Therapy Certification Institute.



*Keynote speaker Christina Noonan points out various pressure points on a model during her Acupuncture presentation.*



# District Commander remembers America's fallen at Lincoln, Mass., Memorial Day event

Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, served as the keynote speaker during the Lincoln, Mass., Memorial Day Observances, May 26.

Under a large oak tree outside of the Lincoln Public Library, Col. Thalken paid tribute to the U.S. Soldiers that have fallen so that the nation would be free.

"Memorial Day for me is a time for reflection," he said. "It is a time when we look back on all those heroes who throughout our history gave the ultimate sacrifice in defending our nation and our way of life."

Col. Thalken reminded attendees that the nation's first battle for liberty – the American Revolution – began just down the road in Lexington and Concord in 1775. "We remember those who died in the course of liberty in the American Revolution and throughout American history in all the wars and conflicts since that time."

The District Commander talked about how other countries remembered



*Col. Curtis Thalken marches with Lincoln, Mass. Veterans during the Memorial Day Observance.*

their fallen heroes. While serving in Afghanistan, he attended an "ANZAC Day," the Australian and New Zealand version of Memorial Day. "They read every name of every service member who died in the line of duty throughout their history," he said. "When they got to the present day – and they were talking about their fellow comrades who had recently given their lives, soldiers who many of them had known – it was very moving and very emotional."

Col. Thalken then described the different ways that Americans respect and honor those who died for their country. "More than one million American Service Members have died in wars and conflicts since the Revolutionary War," he said.

In particular, Col. Thalken talked about Sgt. First Class Paul R. Smith, the first fallen Soldier to receive the Medal of Honor during the Global War on Terrorism. In 2003, he was mortally wounded during a battle, but still he continued to lay down fire until the enemy attack was repelled, causing heavy enemy casualties and saving the lives of more than 100 U.S. Soldiers.

The keynote speaker also mentioned a local hero, Marine First Lieutenant Brian McPhillips of Pembroke, Mass., who died in 2003 when his unit was ambushed by a band of Jihadists.

He reminded attendees that even as he spoke, U.S. men and women in the Armed Forces were overseas putting their lives on the line for their country. "Let's never forget that we live and breathe in a free country today due to the courage and sacrifices made by those who have come before us and those still serving today, those men and women giving their all when they are called to do so, throughout the history of this great nation," he said. "Let us never forget their sacrifices."

In addition to speaking, Col. Thalken also participated in a marching procession with all of the town's participating Veterans. Other activities included an invocation from the local minister; the singing of the National Anthem, participating Veterans introducing themselves and giving their Branch of Service and where they were stationed; a Patriotic sing-along and a Wreath Laying Ceremony.



*Col. Curtis Thalken addresses the audience at the Memorial Day Observance in Lincoln, Mass.*

# District family bids farewell to Thalken, Nelson

*Continued on from page 6*

Retiree Joe Bocchino took to the podium and presented Col. Thalken with a money clip. While Bocchino served as Executive Assistant, he presented money clips with a scrimshaw maritime engraving to every outgoing District Engineer and Deputy District Engineer as a gift. He said that these will be his last presentations. "I retired during your command, so I just wanted to complete the tradition," he said.

Bocchino's comments turned to Col. Nelson and he reminisced about how the two first met. Col. Nelson is an expert in World War II history, particularly the Italian Campaign. Bocchino's father served and was captured and held for a year during that campaign, but spoke very little of it. With Nelson's help, Bocchino learned the history of the prisoner's of war during that time and got a feel for what his father experienced. He said he was very grateful to Col. Nelson for his help, wished him luck in his new duty station and also presented him with a money clip. "Our paths will cross again," he said.

Peter Hugh followed Bocchino at the podium. He spoke a great deal about serving in Kosovo for a time working on the Camp Bondsteel project with Col. Nelson. Hugh said that it was a pleasure serving with Col. Nelson both in Kosovo and in New England and wished him the best of luck.

John Astley, District Counsel, thanked both colonels for their friendship and wished both of them good luck. "It was great to meet two great

engineers and leaders. They have done a lot for the District," he said.

Farrell McMillan, Chief of Engineering/Planning, presented Col. Thalken and Col. Nelson with traditional Bunker Hill plaques for their

signify. He presented both with junior ranger patches and called them "unit of combat service badges."

The Chief of Construction/Operations talked about wanting to acquire new tractors for the field. "Ancient

John Deere tractors only exist at our projects," he joked.

He presented both colonels with toy John Deere tractors, referring to them with affection as "Farm Boy Soldiers."

Bill Sutyak, acting chief Civil Integration Division at the North Atlantic Division, thanked both colonels for their service to the District, Division and the nation. He talked about coming up monthly for meetings and getting the status of the greatness that is the Boston Red Sox even



*Col. Andrew Nelson receives his Meritorious Service Medal from Col. Curtis Thalken during the good-bye/retirement party.*

service at New England District. He talked about Col. Thalken's impromptu meetings with his geotechnical engineers during their lunchtime in the District cafeteria and the advice that he would give them during those meetings. "It's been a real pleasure working with both of you," he said.

Dick Carlson, Chief of Construction/Operations, said that he was always amazed at how quickly new District Commanders and Deputy District Commanders learn all about the Corps of Engineers. He presented the colonels with flying discs, junior ranger coins, floatable key chains, and coffee mugs. "We're cleaning out Jerry Stalder's Office," he joked.

Carlson talked about the colonels' uniforms and what all of the patches

though he is a New York Yankees fan. He presented Col. Thalken with a Red Sox Championship baseball hat.

Bill Scully rounded out the speakers for the evening. He thanked the colonels on behalf of the New England District employees for all that they did when they served here. He talked about their accomplishments, both at the District and for their work in the War on Terrorism. He told the audience that Col. Thalken will be retiring from military service and will be working for Tighe and Bond, Inc. Col. Nelson is continuing his military career as Deputy Garrison Commander for Transformation at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. He wished both of them the best and told them both to keep in touch. Scully concluded his





*Col. Curtis Thalken admires his minuteman statue he received as a gift from attendees.*

presentation by giving them both minuteman statues from the employees of the District. “You will always be members of the New England District family,” he said.

Col. Nelson said that a four year assignment is significant in Army life—he had never had an assignment longer than 24 months before. He said that being able to spend four years at one job, in one house and in one community made a terrific difference in his family life. His daughter, Lauren, was able to spend all four years at the same high school and keep the same friends. “Being able to stay here for so long was a great benefit to our family.”

He said this was the first assignment where he was able to take the time to learn everything about the job and to make a difference. He said that having such a diversity of people—retirees, headquarters and field employees—come to his good-bye party was an honor. He thanked everyone in the field for all they do. He thanked all of the offices, especially Regulatory, Construction/Operations and Real Estate for giving him the opportunity to go out in the field with employees and learning about that part of the mission.

Col. Nelson acknowledged Eileen Hughes for welcoming him so warmly every morning and for all the work on a daily basis. He also thanked Angie Vanaria for her work. “You were the first voice that I heard on the phone when I arrived at the District and you will be the last voice I hear as I leave,” he said.

Col. Nelson recognized Bill Scully and the senior leaders and thanked them for their efforts during his tour. Lastly, Col. Nelson thanked Col. Thalken for lobbying for him to get promoted to colonel. “I had planned to retire to New England this summer, but thanks to Col. Thalken and some of our general officers, I have been given a new opportunity to further my career,” he

said.

Col. Thalken said that he began his career in New England at Fort Devens and that he was thrilled to be able to return to the region to command the District. “We love New England so much, we will settle here,” he said. “Eventually I know I will lose my ‘r’s’ when I speak.”

The District Commander thanked Vanaria for keeping him out of trouble and keeping him focused, and Scully who knows “where all the New England skeletons are buried.” He also acknowledged Eileen Hughes, Steve

Andon, his “Monday Morning Crew” also known as the Senior Leaders, and all the Division and Separate Offices for their hard work they do for the people of New England.

Some of his fondest memories that he will take with him working at the District will include operating Littleville Dam during a flood event (“I pushed the little green button and then soon after I pushed the little red button”), and sitting down with the engineers at lunch time in the cafeteria to help solve some engineering problems. “It’s been a short three years,” he said. “Keep going—New England will be safer for it.”

The official part of the party concluded after Col. Thalken and Col. Nelson cut the cakes for dessert.

Mrs. Carolyn Thalken accompanied her husband to the good-bye party. Col. Nelson’s wife, Mrs. Beth Nelson, and their daughter, Lauren, also attended.

Retirees that attended the party were Distinguished Civilian Gallery Member Joe Ignazio, George Norton, Joe Bocchino, Fran Donovan, Jack Caffrey, Bill Holtham, and Steve DiLorenzo. Special guests that attended were members of the Massachusetts Community Based Health Care Organization, Col. Bill Donaher and Agnes Nunziato. Paul Hurley, former Concord Park Security Guard, served as disc jockey for the event.



*Col. Curtis Thalken (left) and Col. Andrew Nelson (right) hold up their new tractors, courtesy of Dick Carlson.*



*Brig. Gen. Semonite addresses the audience.*



*The New England District Ranger Color Guard, commanded by Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre, post the colors during the ceremony.*

## Command of New England District passes from Thalken to Feir during ceremony

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Gen. Semonite. "He is also a former District Commander in San Francisco when he was a Lieutenant Colonel. He has the knowledge and experience to take the New England District forward."

In his first remarks as District Commander, Col. Feir congratulated Col. Thalken and his family for a job well done and guaranteed the audience that he will give the best he can while commanding the New England District. He thanked all of his family and friends for loving and supporting him and for coming to his Change of Command. One

friend, Lt. Col. MaryAnn Gillgallon, traveled all the way from Alaska to watch her West Point classmate take command of the District.

When talking about his family, Col. Feir said that a good number of them come from New England. "I will not only have to answer to Congressionals and my boss, Brig. Gen. Semonite, but also to my family," he said. "I promise not to let any of you down."

Col. Feir's remarks concluded the Change of Command portion of the event.

Commander William Fauntleroy,

Deputy Commandant at the Naval Chaplain School in Newport, R.I., gave the invocation.

The Air Force Band of Liberty, Colonial Bass Unit from Hanscom Air Force Base, performed various musical selections during the ceremony and the New England District Ranger Color Guard posted and retired the Colors. Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre, Deputy District Commander, served as Commander of Troops.

Col. Feir hosted a meet and greet reception at Concord Park headquarters after the events in Boston.



*Col. Feir addresses attendees for the first time as Commander of the District. (right) The Official Party, led by Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite, enters the Great Hall to begin the ceremony.*







## Change of Command Photo Album

June 27, 2008



*The Official Party prepares to initiate the Change of Command.*

Photos by C.J. Allen



*Mrs. Carolyn Thalken (left) receives red roses from the New England District family.*



*Larry Rosenberg served as Master of Ceremonies.*



*Cmdr. William Fauntleroy gives the invocation during the event.*





## Change of Command Photo Album

June 27, 2008



*The Thalkens listen to Col. Nelson read Mrs. Thalken's Certificate of Appreciation citation.*



*Col. Andrew Nelson served as narrator for Col. Curtis Thalken's retirement ceremony.*



*Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite praises Chelsea and Caitlin Thalken for supporting their father during his career.*



*Col. Curtis Thalken receives a flag flown over the nation's capitol from Congr. Delahunt.*



*Chris Adams from Congr. Delahunt's Office, Bobby Byrne, and Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite.*



*Bagpiper M. Grady Boatwright, Jr.*



*The Thalkens say good-bye to friends after the ceremony.*



## Change of Command Photo Album

June 27, 2008



*The Feir family prepares to cut the cake at their reception at Concord Park.*



*Friends, family and New England District employees wait for Col. Feir's reception to begin.*



*The Feir family greet everyone who stood in line at the reception.*



*A special reception guest tries out the cookies.*



*Mass. CBHCO members learn about the Corps in New England.*



*Reception guests wait patiently to meet the Feirs.*

# Dredging up the past . . .



*Col. Curtis Thalken takes command of the New England District during the Change of Command ceremony on July 8, 2005 at Faneuil Hall in Boston, Mass.*

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